

THE MILITANT

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**Cuban medical cooperation
in Equatorial Guinea**
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Ground raid on Pakistan ordered by White House

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The September 3 ground assault in Pakistan by U.S. Special Forces was authorized under “secretly approved orders” President George Bush put into effect in July, reported the September 11 *New York Times*. These attacks, which are increasingly part of the Pentagon’s military operations across the Afghanistan border, will be conducted without prior approval of the Pakistani government, the *Times* story said.

The assault was a larger operation than had previously been reported. Two anonymous U.S. officials told the *Times* that it involved more than two dozen members of the Navy Seals, who spent several hours on the ground. They opened fire on inhabitants in the village of Musa Nikow in the South Waziristan district of Pakistan. An AC-130 gunship participated in the operation and then whisked the troops away. Twenty people were killed, including at least 16 civilians. An unnamed Pakistani official said that the Pakistani Army was told about the commando raid only after it happened, the *Times* reported.

The assault was followed by three days of airstrikes by remotely piloted

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Calero: ‘Need public works to rebuild after Ike’

BY ANTHONY DUTROW

HOUSTON, September 16—“A massive government-funded public works program is needed to rapidly get the cleanup done, build new housing, and get utilities up and running,” said Róger Calero, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president.

Calero was speaking with workers here about his proposals on how working people can organize to confront the unfolding social crisis in this state resulting from the indifference shown by capitalist officials of both parties in the aftermath of Hurricane Ike.

“Where is the money going to come from? The government is so strapped now,” asked Felicia Eaton who lives in Houston’s Third Ward, which was severely damaged by the storm.

“Look at the billions the government is using to try to bail out the investment banks and insurance companies. In almost every state they ask working people to make sacrifices at the same time that they pay billions to the bondholders before addressing our needs, the needs of working people,” the SWP presidential candidate answered.

Eaton told Calero that city cleanup

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U.S. bank crisis shocks world financial system

Stocks plunge, more failures to come



Reuters/John Gress

Traders in the S&P 500 pit at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange September 15 after major stocks plunge in response to investment bank Lehman Brothers filing for bankruptcy protection.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The U.S. financial system was jolted in mid-September as Lehman Brothers, the fourth largest investment bank in the United States, filed for bankruptcy and Merrill Lynch, fearing a similar-type

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collapse, agreed to a \$50 billion takeover by Bank of America.

The Dow Jones industrial average fell 4.4 percent September 15, the biggest decline in seven years, and another 4.1 percent two days later. The decline

in stock prices worldwide September 15–17 has resulted in about \$3.6 trillion in losses.

The stock of American International Group (AIG), once the world’s largest insurance company, has plunged more than 90 percent to \$2.05. Last year company shares were as high as \$72. The U.S. government took control of AIG with an \$85 billion bailout September 16.

“The panic in world credit markets reached historic intensity on Wednesday [September 17] prompting a flight to safety of the kind not seen since the

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Events demand freedom for framed-up Cuban Five

Concert in N.Y. draws new forces into fight

BY BEN JOYCE

BRONX, New York—Some 500 people turned out here September 13 to attend “Cinco Estrellas y un Canto” (Five Stars and a Song), a concert to release five framed-up working-class fighters in U.S. prisons. The event was

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Supporters of five march in Washington

BY OLGA RODRIGUEZ

WASHINGTON—Bringing public opinion to bear in the fight to free the Cuban Five is crucial as their case approaches the Supreme Court level, said Leonard Weinglass, one of their lawyers, at a rally here September 13. The

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Militant/Paul Mailhot

More than 100 people marched in Washington, D.C., September 13 to demand the release of the Cuban Five—framed-up and jailed in U.S. prisons for more than 10 years.

Troy Davis supporters call for broad effort to stop execution

BY CLAY DENNISON

ATLANTA—Supporters of Troy Davis, who faces execution September 23 for a crime he did not commit, are urging the broadest possible protests on his behalf. On September 12 the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles denied clemency to Davis. The U.S. Supreme Court is scheduled to discuss whether to hear Davis’s appeal on September 29, six days after his execution date.

In a letter posted on the www.troy-anthonydavis.org web site, Martina Correia, Davis’s sister, said, “This is not the time to think he will be executed. We have to fight them and we have to fight hard.”

On September 11, 500 people rallied on the steps of the Georgia State Capitol here to demand a halt to the execution of Davis. Many wore blue T-shirts that said, “I am Troy Davis.” Speeches were punctuated by chants of “Free Troy Davis,” “Justice matters,” and “I am Troy Davis.”

The high point of the rally was a phone call from Davis himself. “This is not just my fight,” he said. “There

are a lot of innocent people in prison. A lot of laws need to be changed.”

“I am not just Troy Davis. I am you,” he said. “The same thing that happened to me could happen to any of you.”

Daveeda Argrow and Denise Larkin, young workers who had come from Savannah, Georgia, said that they talked to drivers caught in traffic in front of the gathering. Some of them parked their cars and came to

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UK farmers protest low pay for milk contracts

BY PAUL DAVIES

LONDON—Thirty-five farmers demonstrated at the headquarters of the Tesco supermarket chain in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire, August 26 with a large banner that read, “We can’t afford to feed you anymore.” Organized by Farmers For Action (FFA), the event drew participants from across the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Farmers held placards saying, “No to farmers subsidizing price wars” and “No more signing under cost of production contracts.”

James Watson, who farms 300 acres in Stranraer, Scotland, left other family members to milk his cows so he could take part in the protest. He estimates that “30 dairy farmers a month are quitting, because they cannot make a living. Supermarkets like Tesco show us total disregard.”

A report published in the *Daily Telegraph* noted that farmers lose on average 4.7 pence [1 pence = US\$0.08] on every liter of milk they produce. “We have had to absorb the rising costs of fertilizer, fuel, and animal feed,” said Youleite Parkes, who farms near Reigate in Surrey. “Supermarkets will pay 30 pence a liter to those with larger farms who can supply over a million liters of milk, but farmers like us will only get 25 to 27 pence per liter.”

One placard read, “No to signing intrusive contracts.” David Handley, chairman of FFA, said that the supermarket was forcing farmers to sign contracts that “disclose personal borrowings, drawings, and interest rate charges.”

Eddie Punch, general secretary of the Irish Cattle and Sheep Farmers Asso-

ciation (ICSA) from the Republic of Ireland, said that “the intrusive contracts they are introducing today in the UK they will bring in tomorrow in Ireland.”

“In 1973 beef farmers got 75 percent of the price in the shops of what they produced, today its down to 33 percent,” Punch added. “In the past, farmers went part time and got jobs in construction to make ends meet, but now the construction boom in Ireland is over. There is nowhere to go.”

ICSA president Malcolm Thompson said, “I don’t see Tesco offering open and transparent information on how much margin they are making on farm products such as milk, beef, or lamb. They want to see who is less productive and see who is making a living so that they reduce us all to a meager existence.



Militant/Paul Davies

Farmers outside the national headquarters of Tesco grocery stores in Cheshunt, England.

Farmers mustn’t allow themselves to be intimidated, we need to stand together.”

The farmers’ action follows intensifying competition between supermarket chains over milk prices. Tesco has just reduced the price of its “Fresh ‘n’ lo” brand. It receives this milk from

Wiseman’s dairies, which pays farmers less than Tesco. Doris Robertson, who farms just south of Glasgow, Scotland, told this reporter that a small dairy she supplies said it would reduce the price that it pays farmers to compete with the supermarkets.

Former union official at Swift plant in Iowa appeals ‘harboring illegal aliens’ conviction

BY HELEN MEYERS

MARSHALLTOWN, Iowa —Braulio Pereyra-Gabino, a former vice president of Local 1149 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union at the Swift meatpacking plant here, is appealing his conviction for “harboring illegal aliens” and the sentence he received of one year and one day in prison. The former union official was also ordered to pay a \$2,000 fine and \$100 to the Crime Victim fund.

Pereyra-Gabino’s arrest came several months after the Dec. 12, 2006, raid on six Swift plants by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Nearly

1,300 workers were arrested.

Pereyra-Gabino was arrested July 10, 2007, when ICE conducted a second raid of Swift and arrested 25 people. ICE spokesman Tim Counts called these raids “a continuation of the same investigation” that resulted in the December 2006 arrests. “Then we were serving federal search warrants that permitted us to go into these plants and question every employee,” he said. “In this case, we were looking for specific individuals—a much more focused and highly targeted operation.”

In an interview with the *Militant*, Pereyra-Gabino said his job “was to give union orientation to recently hired Hispanic workers. My job was to build the union. If a worker had a problem, I would refer them to an attorney.”

“If I see someone drowning, I’ll help him,” he added. “I don’t say show me your green card before I will help.”

Originally from Argentina, Pereyra-Gabino has lived in the United States more than 40 years and has worked at Swift for the past 12. After his arrest he was suspended and then fired from his union post. The UFCW sent him a certified letter informing him that he

would not receive union assistance for his legal case. “I feel like I have been stabbed in the back,” he said.

The day of his arrest, the national UFCW issued a press release that said, “It does not appear that ICE engaged in the same level of intimidation and overkill as they did in its raids last December . . . to the extent this is the case, the UFCW supports law enforcement efforts that abide by the law and respect the rights of workers.”

Chris Lamb, assistant director of Human Resources at the Marshalltown plant, was also arrested in the July 10 raid. He pleaded guilty to “harboring illegal aliens” and was sentenced to one year probation. As part of a plea bargain, Lamb signed an agreement that requires him “to fully cooperate with the government in its investigation.”

A federal jury convicted Pereyra-Gabino last May. It acquitted him of the charges of false representation of a Social Security number and aggravated identity theft.

It will be several months before Pereyra-Gabino’s appeal is heard in court. In the meantime, he continues to work at Swift.

THE MILITANT

Abolish the death penalty!

The ‘Militant’ explains the stakes in fighting the death penalty and other attacks by the cops and courts on working-class fighters today. Don’t miss a single issue!



Supporters of framed-up death row inmate Troy Davis speak out November 2007.

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New guidelines expand legal cover for FBI spies

BY DOUG NELSON

In the latest salvo in the government's decades-long chipping away at workers rights, the U.S. Justice Department announced September 12 the elimination of legal restrictions on FBI spying in cases related to "national security" and "foreign intelligence" and "civil disorders."

The new guidelines give agents legal cover to use informants, gather information undercover, and conduct physical surveillance on individuals and organizations in the United States before opening an investigation. FBI spokespeople said the new regulations seek to end "illogical" distinctions between what are currently three separate categories: criminal, national security, and foreign intelligence.

The spy methods are already authorized for FBI agents gathering information on "general crimes." But the changes will encourage these methods in fishing for information on activity, including legal activity, that an agent claims is a threat to national security or connected to the interests of another nation. Until now the Justice Department says such spying requires enough "evidence" to open an investigation, but the new regulations require no prior information of any kind.

In the September 12 Justice Department press conference, a senior FBI official gave some examples. The official complained that under current rules agents can't use informants, undercover methods, or physical surveillance to spy on Chinese students based on their attendance at universities that research classified technology that the Chinese government may be interested in.

An official from the Justice Department said one of the "challenging" areas in rewriting the guidelines was the "use of race, religion, and ethnicity."

Pakistan

Continued from front page

U.S. drones in the surrounding area. For years the CIA has been firing missiles from Predator aircraft over the skies of Afghanistan and Pakistan. A new U.S. command structure put in place this year assigns the CIA, operating out of the Bagram air base in Afghanistan, to coordinate military actions in the Afghan-Pakistani border region.

The ground attack led to new rifts within Pakistan's government, which has cooperated with Washington in its "war on terror" since late 2001. Leading Pakistani officials condemned the attack, but also made clear they prefer U.S. air strikes in these areas to Special Operations forces on the ground.

"Such intrusions are not covered by any agreement," stated Pakistani army chief Gen. Ashfaq Kayani. U.S. forces "are not allowed to conduct operations on our side of the border. The country's sovereignty and territorial integrity will be defended at all costs," he insisted.

NATO took its distance from the U.S. troop raid into Pakistan. "It is not NATO that will be sending its forces across the border," James Appathurai told the media September 11. "Our mandate ends at the border." An Army brigade and Marine battalion totaling 4,500 U.S. troops are on their way there.

The guidelines maintain the approach established in 2003 to use profiling based on race, religion, and ethnicity when "appropriate," he said.

The new regulations would also revise the guidelines established in 1976 that placed some legal restrictions on FBI spying at public demonstrations and infiltration of political organizations, coming out of the revelations of government surveillance and disruption exposed by the Watergate scandal.

The Justice Department revisions are scheduled to go into effect October 1. FBI agents are already being trained on the new guidelines.

U.S. troops in Iraq cut; more go to Afghanistan

BY DOUG NELSON

U.S. president George Bush announced September 9 that the military will withdraw 8,000 troops from its occupying force in Iraq by February. There will still be some 138,000 U.S. troops in Iraq. Speaking at the National Defense University, Bush also said about 4,500 troops will be sent to Afghanistan where U.S. forces have grown by one-third over the last two years.

The reduction would bring the number of U.S. troops in Iraq below what it was before the 30,000 troop increase, dubbed the "surge," began in January 2007. The reduction is based on the success of Washington's offensive in establishing enough stability for its client regime to function in Baghdad. Al-Qaeda in Iraq has been greatly weakened and the Iraqi government forces substantially strengthened.

A number of Washington's "coalition partners" are also withdrawing or reducing their troops.

Washington's advances since early 2007 were made possible by help from wealthy Sunni forces around Baghdad and the western provinces that had previously been the backbone of support for Saddam Hussein's regime. Following Hussein's overthrow they financed and organized Sunni militias



Roberto Mercado

Demonstration against use of grand jury to investigate Puerto Rican independence supporters outside federal courthouse in Brooklyn, New York, January 11. New guidelines that strengthen the ability of the FBI to spy on individuals and infiltrate groups were announced by the Justice Department September 12.

that fought U.S. and Iraqi government troops. These forces turned against al-Qaeda and allied themselves with the occupying army in reaction to chaos created by al-Qaeda's methods of indiscriminate killing and extortion.

These Sunni-allied forces, known as the Awakening Councils, include nearly 100,000 combatants on the U.S. military payroll. More than half of these forces are expected to come under the administration of the Iraqi government October 1.

Al-Qaeda's defeat in Anbar, once its major stronghold, was registered when the Iraqi government took responsibility for security in the province September 1. U.S. and Iraqi forces are moving to quell other areas where Sunni militias operate, including Diyala province, Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul.

Increasingly, the Iraqi military has been conducting operations in which U.S. forces play a support role. Early this year, operations led by Iraqi forces defeated the Shiite Mahdi Army militia in Basra, Baghdad, and al-Amarah. The militia's head, Shiite

cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, disbanded his Mahdi Army after Iraqi troops in May seized the Sadr City neighborhood of Baghdad from where the militia operated.

Washington and the Iraqi government are hammering out an agreement to provide a legal framework for a long-term presence of U.S. forces in the country.

About 90,000 civilian deaths at the hands of Washington's soldiers, insurgent forces, and others have been reported since the war began.

At the same time, the imperialist occupation of Afghanistan has faced increased activity from Taliban and al-Qaeda forces there and in the border regions of Pakistan. In response, Washington has been carrying out what President Bush called a "quiet surge" in Afghanistan. The number of U.S. troops has increased from less than 21,000 to nearly 31,000 in two years, and the trained Afghan military and police forces more than doubled.

Nine other countries have also sent additional troops as part of the U.S.-led

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SWP presidential campaign tour schedule



Presidential candidate Róger Calero, center facing camera, speaks with participants in May Day rally in Los Angeles demanding legalization of immigrants.



Vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy being interviewed by a Georgia TV station April 1 at a truckers' convoy in Atlanta protesting high fuel costs.

Presidential candidate Róger Calero

Sept. 20–22 Miami	Oct. 6–7 Montreal
Sept. 23–25 Twin Cities, MN	Oct. 9–11 San Francisco
Sept. 26–28 Des Moines, IA	Oct. 13–15 Houston; Edinburg, TX
Sept. 30–Oct. 1 Omaha, NE	Oct. 17–19 Seattle

Vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy

Sept. 23–26 Seattle	Oct. 5 Wisconsin
Sept. 28–30 Los Angeles	Oct. 6–8 Chicago
Oct. 1 San Diego	Oct. 10–13 Atlanta
Oct. 2–3 Albuquerque, NM	Oct. 14–16 Miami

Calero: Need public works

Continued from front page
crews had come through the neighborhood and removed fallen trees from the streets but left others that had fallen on homes. “A lot of us have come by to help relatives and friends,” she said.

Minutes after getting off the plane here Calero got a chance to see firsthand what working people are facing. There were some 50 storm-related deaths in nine states, 14 in Texas. Thousands of people are in acute need of ice, water, food and fuel. More than 2 million are without electrical power.

Calero was accompanied by three local SWP candidates—Jacquie Henderson for U.S. Senate, Steve Warshell for Congress in Houston’s 18th CD, and Anthony Dutrow for State Senate District 138.

Calero visited a few points of distribution (PODs), which the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) claimed were stocked with ice, food, and water for up to 5 million long before Ike landed.

“Well before the points of distribution were supposed to close for the day, supplies had been depleted in several of the sites,” said Calero. “In others, I saw the long lines of cars of people trying to pick up supplies.”

“We got some water and ice from the government agencies,” said Jorge Gutierrez, “but that hasn’t been adequate.” Volunteers had gathered to clean up mud and debris left by the storm outside the Luz del Mundo church just west of downtown Houston. “We have pooled together enough to help church members, including some from Galveston,” Gutierrez explained to Calero and Warshell. They worked to clean up the street just a few blocks from the Ripley House distribution site, which closed down early for lack of supplies.

The presidential candidate and sup-



Militant/Jacquie Henderson
Róger Calero discussed with Houston workers the need for a public works program and nationalization of the energy industry to respond to Ike’s devastation.

porters also visited a distribution site located near Texas Southern University, a section of the city where the majority of workers are Black. There as well operations had shut down early.

There were at least five confirmed deaths in Galveston, which has a large population of Blacks dating back generations. Many of them live in modest homes that couldn’t withstand the flooding. About 15,000 people were trying to survive in damaged houses.

At a press conference this evening Houston mayor William White complained that the supplies from FEMA to replenish the distribution sites have not been nearly what has been requested. Despite that, he added, the supply centers will be reduced over the next few days as power is returned to parts of the city. “People will have to adjust,” he said.

City authorities here have said that restoring electricity is out of their hands since this service is run by a private company. “We want to remind you that CenterPoint Energy is a private company,” White stated. “They [CenterPoint] must understand that they are the only ones that have the technical ability to get the power restored.”

CenterPoint Energy officials have said it could take more than three weeks to fully restore power to parts of the city.

In response, the socialist presidential candidate called for nationalizing the energy industry and placing it under workers control. “CenterPoint Energy makes decisions on the basis of what is profitable to them. More workers can be hired and resources allocated to get the system back up. With workers committees reviewing the companies financial books we can expose the price gouging done by the oil companies,” he stated.

Thomas Hadden came from Bay City, about 80 miles south of Houston, to help out. He put his chain saw in his truck as he talked with Calero. “I thought I had my vote locked, but I am willing to consider other alternatives. I like the fact that you came here to see what’s happened. I’m going to look at what you have to say,” said Hadden, shaking Calero’s hand and taking a copy of the campaign brochure outlining the SWP’s platform.

Jacquie Henderson and Steve Warshell contributed to this article.

Wealthy landowners try to destabilize Bolivian gov’t

BY SAM MANUEL

The Bolivian government expelled the U.S. ambassador September 10 charging him with supporting wealthy land and business owners who have been carrying out a violent campaign to destabilize the government of President Evo Morales.

A week later Washington placed Bolivia on its list of major “drug transit and producing countries.” The U.S. embassy in La Paz also sent home all non-emergency personnel and encouraged U.S. citizens to leave the country.

A meeting of the four-month-old Union of South American Countries condemned any coup attempt against the Bolivian government and said it would investigate the killing of some 30 peasant supporters of Morales in Bolivia’s Pando region.

The order to expel U.S. ambassador Philip Goldberg came after accusations that the U.S. embassy used its “anti-drug” programs and “intelligence” contacts from the previous regime to

encourage opposition to the Morales government. The U.S. suspended its Peace Corps program in Bolivia, evacuating its 115 volunteers to Peru. The embassy has also arranged fights for U.S. citizens wanting to leave Bolivia, reported the French press agency AFP.

Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez expelled the U.S. ambassador in Caracas in a show of solidarity with Morales. The government of Honduras delayed recognition of the arriving U.S. ambassador to that country for a week.

The campaign to destabilize the Bolivian government has been led by the governors of the provinces of Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni, and Pando. These provinces contain much of Bolivia’s oil and natural gas reserves and produce much of the country’s food. They are dominated by wealthy landowners and capitalists who violently oppose the government’s modest land reform and the use of revenues from the sale

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U.S. bank failures

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second world war,” reported the *Financial Times* September 17. “Lending between banks in Europe and the U.S. in effect halted” that day.

These developments point to the largest financial crisis facing the U.S. rulers since the opening of the Great Depression. They occur a week after the federal government seized control of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the giant mortgage companies.

“In the past when you had a crisis that resulted in a big failure, that ended up being closer to the bottom than anything else, Liz Sonders, the chief investment strategist for Charles Schwab & Company told the *New York Times*. “The problem is that we have waves of these. Where does it stop is the question that is different than in the past.”

Lehman Brothers, the oldest major firm on Wall Street, had been in operation since before the Civil War, and Merrill Lynch for the past 94 years.

In 2006 Lehman was the top underwriter of subprime mortgage securities with an 11 percent market share, according to Inside Mortgage Finance. However, over the past year, with rising mortgage defaults and declining home prices, its stocks declined about 90 percent. In February 2007 the company’s stock market value was nearly \$50 billion at \$86.18 a share. As of September 12 of this year its stocks were worth \$2.5 billion at \$3.65 a share.

Lehman Brothers owes more than \$600 billion to creditors across the United States as well as in Europe and Asia, according to the investment bank’s Chapter 11 filing. Citigroup and Bank of New York Mellon are owed about \$138 billion in Lehman’s bond debt. Four banks in Japan are owed a total of about \$1.26 billion. Financial institutions in South Korea are owed about \$700 million, and BNP Paribas in France, \$250 million.

Just prior to its collapse, Lehman attempted to divide the company’s debt into a “good” bank and a “bad” bank, the latter of which would contain about \$85 billion in “souring assets,” reported

the *Wall Street Journal*. The plan was to have other Wall Street firms inject some capital to keep the “bad” bank from sinking. Major bank executives rejected this approach.

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson and Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke called a September 12–13 emergency meeting of executives of about 30 banks to make clear that there would be no direct federal bailout of Lehman. Federal officials pleaded with the bankers to take over or put up the funds to salvage Lehman, but to no avail.

The Federal Reserve, however, did make it easier for financial companies to obtain loans of up to \$200 billion by furnishing any kind of investment-type papers, including junk bonds. A group of 10 major domestic and foreign banks said they would contribute \$70 billion to an emergency borrowing facility to which failing financial firms can have access.

On September 15, the same day that Lehman filed for bankruptcy, Merrill Lynch was bought by Bank of America. Merrill Lynch, the world’s largest brokerage firm, had a paper value of more than \$100 billion last year. Its stock shares have fallen nearly 70 percent this year.

Merrill had employed as many as 60,000 people. Lehman, about 25,000. Many of them will now be joining the ranks of the millions currently unemployed.

“Merrill Lynch is hardly the only troubled financial institution on the horizon,” stated a September 15 *New York Times* article. “Administration officials acknowledged last week that more bank failures were inevitable, and the main protection for depositors—the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation—is likely to exhaust its reserves.”

AIG put hundreds of billions of funds in derivatives and hedge fund transactions, reported the *Financial Times*. New York governor David Paterson announced September 15 that AIG could borrow \$20 billion from the state to help keep itself afloat.

Socialist Workers on the ballot in:

	NEW YORK
	NEW JERSEY
	WASHINGTON
	VERMONT
	MINNESOTA
	LOUISIANA
	FLORIDA
	DELAWARE
	COLORADO
	IOWA

Farm worker convention discusses fight against abusive work conditions

BY BETSEY STONE

FRESNO, California—The deaths this summer from heat stroke of six California farm workers were at the center of much of the discussion at the 18th convention of the United Farm Workers, held here August 22–24 in the heart of California's Central Valley.

Union organizing director Armando Elenes described to convention delegates some of the criminal, abusive behavior to which these workers were subjected.

Maria Isabel Vázquez Jiménez, 17, collapsed on May 14 while pruning a vineyard in heat that topped 95 degrees. Workers only had one water break that day and water was a 10-minute walk away, too far to get to and keep up with the crew.

Maria de Jesús Alvarez, 63, died of heat stroke and dehydration July 15 after working without access to shade in heat that reached 111 degrees.

Jorge Herrera, 37, passed out July 10 while loading table grapes in 108 degree heat.

Several speakers at the convention emphasized that the only way to ef-

fectively fight abusive conditions in the fields is to build the union.

Of the more than 450,000 agricultural workers in the California fields only a small percentage are organized into the United Farm Workers. Elenes pointed out that the majority of recent deaths were of workers involved in harvesting table grapes, a crop where there is almost no union presence. These are the fields where farm workers battled in the 1960s and '70s to establish the union.

Other speakers pointed out that Cal/OSHA, the government agency assigned to enforce work safety, is complicit in maintaining the conditions that have led to the deaths—at least 15 in California since 2005.

After protests put the spotlight on the case of Maria Isabel Vázquez, Cal/OSHA fined the contractor \$262,700. In other cases growers and contractors have been fined an average of only \$9,945 for farm workers who died between 2005 to 2008. The fines are often dropped when appealed, in one case ending up at just \$250.

Widespread use of piecework exacerbates the unsafe conditions. Work-



Farm workers and supporters protest at Sacramento state capitol, August 18. Crosses represent 15 workers who have died of heat stroke while working in the fields in last three years.

ers are driven to risk their health to make the rate. The bosses are also using more machines for the harvests, forcing workers to work faster to keep up.

Reflecting the growing number of farm workers from indigenous communities in Mexico, several presentations at the convention were made in the indigenous languages of Mixtec and Triqui.

Mixtec and Triqui workers in the pea fields near Salinas played an im-

portant role in a two-day strike in April. They were protesting a quota requiring workers to pick 200 pounds of peas per day. They won their demands for the rehiring of 20 workers who had been fired for not making the quota, and for fresh, clean, drinking water at no cost. They were being charged 50 cents to a dollar per day for water.

A resolution was passed by convention delegates promoting a bill in Congress on immigration known as the "AgJOBS" bill. This legislation would give temporary resident status to farm workers who have 863 hours or 150 days working in the fields during the 24-month period ending Dec. 31, 2006, with a path to permanent residency that includes more stringent requirements.

Another resolution was passed supporting plans by union officials to recruit to the union guest workers in the U.S. under H2-A legislation. There are about 75,000 such workers, the majority working in the Southeast and Midwest. According to H2-A law, they can stay in this country for only 10 months and are subject to deportation if they cease working for the employer who brought them here.

Carole Lesnick contributed to this article.

Socialist candidate talks to L.A. students

BY WENDY LYONS

LOS ANGELES—Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Róger Calero engaged in a lively discussion with students in four classes at Animo Leadership High School in Inglewood, California, September 2.

Questions included: "How can we get legalization of immigrants?" "If so many immigrants come won't that cause overpopulation?" "What would happen to the owners if workers take power?" One student asked, "Why is it a mistake to vote for Obama if he offers hope and change?"

"Because all you get is hope," said Calero. "Look at the record. He is for deepening the war in Afghanistan and extending it to Pakistan. Both Obama and McCain would be war presidents. We are for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from around the world.

"Obama's plan for health care is to force you to buy it, like car insurance. We say health care should be a right for all. The Democrats' and Republicans' plan for immigrant workers is border walls and more factory raids. We say immediate legalization."

On August 30 Calero addressed a forum where more than \$2,400 was raised for the national SWP campaign.

On August 29, 1,500 ground service workers, members of Service Employees International Union Local

1877, went on strike at Los Angeles International Airport.

"They wanted to extend their strike over the Labor Day holiday weekend, which would have put them in a favorable position to fight for their demands," Calero said. "But Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa brokered a three-week cooling-off period. This is a valuable lesson about how the rulers bring in capitalist politicians to help police the unions. Workers must take ownership of our struggles. We need a labor party, based on a fighting union movement to contest against the Democrats and Republicans."

"Can you explain your proposal to put millions to work at union-scale

wages?" asked one participant in the forum. "For most workers union wages are not livable. So how should we explain this? What is union scale?"

"What we're talking about here is the transformation of the unions—the most powerful existing organizations of the working class—into revolutionary instruments of class struggle," said Calero. "The union-scale wages we are talking about go hand in hand with this transformation. We don't put a dollar amount on union scale; we'll take what we are strong enough to take."

Calero was interviewed September 1 on the Spanish-language Telemundo TV show "En Contexto."

Border cops can seize laptops without cause

BY ROBBY SILVER

MINNEAPOLIS—Under a new U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) search policy, border cops no longer need to claim suspicion to inspect or detain books, magazines, laptops, CDs, memory cards, mobile phones, or any electronic device carried by anyone entering, leaving, or passing through the United States.

The CBP, a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) agency, has conducted "border searches" and seizures for years at U.S. borders and airports. The U.S. Supreme Court has decided that border cops aren't affected by rules that restrict other cops because border areas are not regulated by normal laws.

DHS secretary Michael Chertoff defends the new policy in a July 16 *USA Today* opinion piece. "In the 21st century, the most dangerous contraband is often contained in laptop computers or other electronic devices," Chertoff writes. "Officers have discovered

video clips of improvised explosive devices being detonated, a martyrdom video, and other violent jihadist materials."

Chertoff claims that the DHS is "mindful of travelers' privacy," citing that no devices would be kept permanently without cause. Copied information of U.S. citizens would be retained only if relevant to an investigation. He says that only a "tiny percentage" of those entering the United States are referred to individual baggage inspection and "only a fraction" of them had electronic devices that may have been checked.

Jayson Ahern, CBP deputy commissioner, estimates that "tiny fraction" is less than 1 percent out of 400 million travelers per year to the United States—as many as 4 million people.

In April the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of border police who in 2005 scrutinized a returning traveler's laptop without "reasonable suspicion" for several hours until find-

ing child pornography photos.

Despite the fact that courts haven't yet given agents a legal basis to permanently seize personal effects without suspicion during border searches, the CBP policy states that "officers may detain documents and electronic devices, or copies . . . for a reasonable period of time to perform a thorough border search. The search may take place on-site or at an off-site location."

CBP may request the assistance of any federal agency or entity to conduct a further examination. Unlimited copies of information can be made and distributed. Any agency assisting the CBP may keep such copies if the matter also falls under that agency's jurisdiction. Otherwise, they say, copies should be destroyed. CBP may "retain documents relating to immigration matters" indefinitely.

The DHS promises to pay special attention to keeping "personal and trade information" relating to business confidential.

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by Jack Barnes

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Cuban 5 action in D.C.

Continued from front page
rally and a lively march that preceded it both drew more than 100 people.

Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, René González, and Antonio Guerrero have been imprisoned for 10 years on charges of “conspiracy to commit espionage” and in one case, “conspiracy to commit murder.” They were arrested in south Florida in 1998 where they were monitoring the activities of right-wing Cuban groups that have attacked Cuba with Washington’s backing.

“It is very important that this march took place here in D.C.,” Weinglass said, “because this is where the next stage of the legal fight to free the five will take place—in the Supreme Court.” He stressed the importance of putting maximum pressure on the court’s justices to hear the five’s appeal.

At the heart of the Cuban Five appeal to the Supreme Court, Weinglass said, is the fact that the defendants were unable to receive a fair trial in Miami. In 2005, a three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the convictions of the five and ordered a new trial because of the atmosphere of intimidation created by the actions of right-wing Cuban groups in that city. That ruling was subsequently overturned by the full 12-judge court.

Weinglass pointed out that the issue of venue is key to the right to a fair trial, noting that it is a major question in many death penalty cases. He said the Cuban Five defense is reaching out to organizations like the NAACP and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, urging them to file friend-of-the-court briefs in support of the Cuban Five appeal.

Gloria La Riva, coordinator of the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five, was another featured speaker at the meeting, which was held at the Service Employees International Union building. La Riva said that a campaign of street actions, legal defense, and publicity—especially reaching out to youth—is needed to win the five’s release.

José Bolaños, head of the Cuban In-

terests Section in Washington, also addressed the Cuban Five meeting and thanked participants for their continued support. He explained that despite devastating damages to much of Cuba caused by two major hurricanes in less than two weeks Cubans will rebuild and the revolution will continue to go forward. The Cuban government immediately extended aid to Haiti, which suffered significant damage and a much greater loss of life than Cuba did during the hurricanes, he added.

Benjamin Ramos of the Popular Education Project to Free the Cuban Five read a letter from the Cuban Five. Lucius Walker, leader of IFCO/Pastors for Peace, spoke, urging material aid for Cuba as its people work to recover from hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

Earlier that day, demonstrators assembled at Malcolm X Park. Banbose Shango of the D.C. Metro Committee to Free the Five and Ignacio Meneses of the National Network on Cuba introduced speakers from the D.C. chapter of the Salvadoran Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front, Socialist Workers Party, Party for Socialism and Liberation, Green Party, Pastors for Peace, and Cuba Solidarity New York, among others.

Waving colorful banners and placards with pictures of the five, the dem-



Demonstration outside U.S. embassy in Seoul, South Korea, on September 12 demanding the immediate release of the Cuban Five.

onstrators then marched through the streets here, chanting, “Free, free, free the five!” and passing out fliers on the case to bystanders along the route.

Participants in the march and meeting came from Washington, New York, Philadelphia, and New Jersey, along with others from cities as far away as Atlanta, Detroit, and Miami.



In Miami 75 people attended a meeting September 14 in defense of the Cuban Five. Andrés Gómez, director of the Antonio Maceo Brigade, and Max Lesnick, a leader of Alianza Martiana, were the featured speakers.

“The fight for the freedom of the five is not just about the five,” Lesnick said. “It’s about the millions.” The meeting

announced a car caravan protest against U.S. restrictions on travel to Cuba September 20.

Some 20 supporters of the five held an event in a busy shopping district in Boston September 12. They displayed signs saying, “Free the Cuban Five”; “10 years of injustice is too much”; and “Real hurricane relief for Cuba—End the embargo now!”

That same day activists in Seoul, South Korea, held a September 12 rally to back the Cuban Five. They delivered a letter to the U.S. embassy demanding freedom for the five and an end to U.S. government support for right-wing Cuban groups.

Bernie Senter in Miami and Laura Garza in Boston contributed to this article.

New York concert backs Cuban Five fight

Continued from front page

part of activities around the world on the 10th anniversary of the imprisonment of Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, René González, and Antonio Guerrero, known as the Cuban Five.

Held at the Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture at Hostos Community College, the concert included performances by renowned Puerto Rican singer/songwriter Danny Rivera, the Puerto Rican Golden Jazz All Stars, and Dominican *bachata* artist Victor Victor. Stand-up comedian Bill Santiago emceed the event. The International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban 5 sponsored

the event.

A local public radio station promoted the gathering in the week leading up to it. The concert was recorded for broadcast on the Venezuela-based television network Telesur.

The Cuban Five were arrested in 1998 on frame-up charges that they were involved in a part of a “conspiracy to commit espionage” and in one case, a “conspiracy to commit murder.” The five had been keeping the Cuban government informed about rightist groups that have a long record of carrying out bombings and armed attacks on Cuba from U.S. soil.

Lillian Pérez and Edith Cruz of the Bronx were among the many people at the concert who learned about the case of the Cuban Five for the first time. “People like me come here to listen to the music and end up learning about the reality they [Cuban Five] face,” Pérez told the *Militant*. “We will definitely look into it.”

Many in the crowd were Puerto Rican and responded warmly to calls from the stage for Puerto Rican independence. Also attending were UN ambassadors from Ecuador, Bolivia, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe, St. Vincent, and Cuba.

After the performance by the Puerto Rican Golden Jazz All Stars, Alicia Jrapko of the International Committee thanked the artists for lending their talents to the defense campaign. She spoke about the importance of the case, including the fight to win U.S. visas for Adriana Pérez and Olga Salanueva, wives of René González and Gerardo Hernández respectively, so that they can visit their husbands in prison. She also read greetings from actor Danny Glover.

Nancy Cabrero, president of Casa de las Américas, a Cuban American group that supports the Cuban Revolution, read a message signed by the five that thanked the organizers and artists and

encouraged everyone to continue the fight for their freedom.

Victor Victor performed second in the lineup. “It is our duty to be here tonight in solidarity with the Cuban Five,” he said. After a brief intermission, Danny Rivera took the stage. During his set he shared the stage with Grupo Rumba Caribe who performed a song dedicated to the five.

“It seems like the case has gone under the radar,” said Doug Smith, a student at Concordia University in Montreal. “But this [concert] can present the issue as it really is and help it get more exposure.”

After the event, Jrapko said she was happy with its success. “It’s important to reach out to new people,” she said. “This kind of thing can also be done elsewhere to raise awareness for the Cuban Five.”

Pablo Marcano, a Puerto Rican painter and former political prisoner, introduced Danny Rivera. Afterwards he told the *Militant* that the concert was successful in getting the message of the five out. “The more people that get involved, the faster the five will be free,” he said. “I’m telling you from experience. That’s how we freed the Puerto Rican political prisoners,” referring to the independence fighters who have been framed up and jailed by the U.S. government for their opposition to colonial domination by Washington.

“We have experience with political repression of those who fight colonialism in Puerto Rico,” said Roberto Silva of Grupo Rumba Caribe. “The Cuban Five are political prisoners just like the Puerto Rican political prisoners.”

A counterprotest outside the venue of 30 people tried without success to intimidate people from entering the concert hall. Their leaflets read, “Why are public facilities used to promote freedom for spies, enemies of this nation?” The protest was organized by the United Cuban Organization of Union City, New Jersey.

Cuban 5 ‘deserve working people’s support’



Militant/Paul Mailhot

WASHINGTON—Róger Calero, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. president, along with SWP leader Mary-Alice Waters, carry banner to free the Cuban Five at September 13 march. Speaking at the rally preceding the September 13 march Calero said, “The frame-up of the five is part of the U.S. class struggle. These fighters deserve the support of all working people.”

The illegal search and seizure, denial of the right to a speedy trial, long stints in solitary confinement, prison lockdowns, and denial of visitation rights directed against the five are similar to the U.S. government attacks many working people confront, he explained.

“Another reason for working people to support the five is that they carry out political work *inside* prison—setting an example on how to extend political space in jail,” Calero pointed out. “At the same time they give their solidarity to workers struggles on the outside.”

—OLGA RODRÍGUEZ

‘Human liberation and the proletarian revolution’

Among Pathfinder’s September Books of the Month is What Is Surrealism? Selected Writings by André Breton. Reprinted here is an excerpt from a lecture he presented in Brussels on June 1, 1934, at a meeting organized by Belgian surrealists shortly after the coming to power of the fascists in Germany. Breton (1896–1966) was a founder and major theorist of the surrealist movement, one of the most influential currents of 20th century art and criticism. Copyright © 1978 by Franklin Rosemont.

BY ANDRÉ BRETON

Let us be careful, today, not to underestimate the peril: The shadow has greatly advanced over Europe recently. Hitler, Dollfuss and Mussolini have either drowned in blood or subjected



Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky (right) speaking with André Breton (left) and Mexican artist Diego Rivera.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

to corporal humiliation everything that formed the effort of generations straining towards a more tolerable and more worthy form of existence. The other day I noticed on the front page of a Paris newspaper a photograph of the surroundings of the Lambrechies mine on the day after the catastrophe. This photograph illustrated an article

titled, in quotation marks, ‘Only Our Chagrin Remains’. On the same page was another photograph—this one of the unemployed of your country standing in front of a hovel in the Parisian ‘poor zone’—with the caption *Poverty is not a crime*. ‘How delightful!’ I said to myself, glancing from one picture to the other. Thus the bourgeois public in France is able to console itself with the knowledge that the miners of your country were not necessarily criminals just because they got themselves killed for 35 francs a day. And doubtless the miners, our comrades, will be happy to learn that the committee of the Belgian Coal Association intends to postpone till the day after tomorrow the application of the wage cut set for 20 May.

In capitalist society, hypocrisy and cynicism have now lost all sense of proportion and are becoming more outrageous every day. Without making exaggerated sacrifices to humanitarianism, which always involve impossible reconciliations and truces to the advantage of the stronger, I should say that thought cannot in this atmosphere contemplate the exterior world without immediately shuddering. Everything we know about fascism shows that it is precisely the confirmation of this state of affairs, aggravated to its uttermost by the lasting resignation that it seeks to obtain from

those who suffer. Is not the evident role of fascism to re-establish for the time being the tottering supremacy of finance capital? Such a role is of itself sufficient to make it deserving of all our hatred. We continue to consider this feigned resignation as one of the greatest evils that can be inflicted on beings of our kind; and those who would inflict it deserve, in our opinion, to be beaten like dogs.

Yet it is impossible to conceal the fact that this immense danger is there, lurking at our doors, that it has made its appearance within our walls, and that it would be pure byzantinism to dispute too long, as in Germany, over the choice of the barrier to be set up against it, when all the while, *under several aspects*, it is creeping nearer and nearer to us.

In the course of taking various steps with a view to contributing, in so far as I am capable, to the organisation in Paris of the anti-fascist struggle, I have noticed that already a certain doubt has crept into the intellectual circles of the left as to the possibility of successfully combating fascism, a doubt which has unfortunately infected even those elements whom one might have thought it possible to rely on and who had come to the fore in this struggle. Some of these have even begun to make excuses for the loss of the battle. Such dispositions are so dismay-

ing to me that I would not care to be speaking here without first making clear my position in relation to them, or without anticipating a whole series of remarks that are to follow, affirming that today, more than ever, the *liberation of the mind*, the express aim of surrealism, demands as a primary condition, in the opinion of the surrealists, the *liberation of man*, which implies that we must struggle against our fetters with all the energy of despair; that today more than ever the surrealists rely entirely, for the bringing about of human liberation, on the proletarian revolution.

I feel free to turn now to the object of this pamphlet, which is to attempt an explanation of what surrealism is. A certain immediate ambiguity contained in the word *surrealism* is capable, in fact, of leading one to suppose that it designates I know not what transcendental attitude, when on the contrary it expresses—and always has expressed for us—a desire to deepen the foundations of the real; to bring about an ever clearer and at the same time ever more passionate consciousness of the world perceived by the senses. The whole evolution of surrealism, from its origins to the present day, which I will now attempt to retrace, shows that our unceasing wish, growing more and more urgent from day to day, has been at all costs to avoid considering a system of thought as a refuge; to pursue our investigations with eyes wide open to the external consequences; and to assure ourselves that the results of these investigations would be capable of facing the *breath of the street*. At the limits, for many years past—or, more exactly, since the conclusion of what one may term the purely *intuitive* epoch of surrealism (1919–25)—at the limits, I say, we have attempted to present interior reality and exterior reality as two elements in process of unification, of finally becoming *one*. This final unification is the supreme aim of surrealism: interior reality and exterior reality being, in the present form of society, in contradiction (and in this contradiction we see the very cause of man’s unhappiness, but also the source of his movement).

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'We'll stay as long as needed'

Cuban medical cooperation with Equatorial Guinea

The following is the third of three articles based on a two-week fact-finding trip to Equatorial Guinea in July and August by supporters of New York-based Pathfinder Press. The previous two articles, "Equatorial Guinea: Changing economic and social realities facing millions in Africa," and "Young Guinean doctors are key to building public health system in Equatorial Guinea," appeared in the September 8 and 22 issues of the Militant.

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL
AND MARY-ALICE WATERS

BATA, Equatorial Guinea—"It took a lot of effort and willpower. We had to learn how to study, and how to study long hours. But today we're graduating as doctors. We will be working to improve the health of the Guinean people," said Benjamín Ntutumu Mbá.

His remark captured the pride and confidence of the 21 doctors who graduated August 5 from the medical school here. They were among 102 students in the class of 2008 at the National University of Equatorial Guinea (UNGE) who received their diplomas. Now they are starting their first jobs as MDs at hospitals and clinics across the country.

The university's medical school in Bata, led and staffed by Cuban doctors for almost a decade, opened in 2000 as part of a program of medical cooperation between the governments of Equatorial Guinea and Cuba. Cuba committed itself to send brigades of doctors, nurses, and lab technicians—today they number 160—to help staff hospitals and public health centers throughout this Central African country. The medical school is training hundreds of Guinean doctors and nurses whose goal is to progressively replace the Cuban personnel currently providing almost all primary health care.



Militant/Martín Koppel

Tecla Mangué Mitogo (foreground) was among 21 young doctors graduating August 5 in Bata, Equatorial Guinea, as part of the class of 2008 at the national university. The aim of the medical school in Bata is to train hundreds of Guinean doctors and nurses to progressively replace Cuban personnel who currently provide almost all primary health care in the country.

The training of Guinean doctors, committed to improve health conditions in their country, is no small achievement in one of the least industrialized countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Equatorial Guinea shares with the rest of the region a centuries-long legacy of colonial and imperialist domination. As in much of Central Africa, malaria is endemic, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, intestinal parasites, and sleeping sickness are widespread, and the incidence of HIV/AIDS infection, while lower than in much of the region, has been increasing.

The health-care crisis inherited by Guineans is magnified by the very workings of the world capitalist system. Drawn by the lure of much higher salaries, better living conditions, and promises of "career" advancement, medical personnel migrate to imperialist countries from Africa and other parts of the semicolonial world. The head of Ghana's public health service, for example, reported in 2005 that the country had lost 30 percent of doctors trained there

to the United States, Britain, Canada, and Australia. Some 5,300 physicians from sub-Saharan Africa were practicing in the United States alone, according to a 2004 study by Human Resources for Health.

The training offered by the Cuban-run medical program, like the Cuban Revolution itself, imbues students with a different class perspective. Instead of promoting personal "advancement," it encourages social solidarity and health care as a human right. It seeks to instill a determination to provide medical services to working people in isolated rural areas and small towns for whom such care has previously been inaccessible and unaffordable.

The medical school program is organized in close cooperation with the Ernesto Che Guevara medical school in Pinar del Río, Cuba. When the program was first launched, a group of Guinean students studied five years in Pinar del Río and their sixth under supervision of the medical school faculty in Bata. Si-

multaneously another group studied five years in Equatorial Guinea and spent their final year in Pinar del Río.

Today all students attend the school here and then complete their sixth year in Cuba, reported Dr. Tebelio Concepción, dean of the facility in Bata. Concepción, a Cuban dentist who previously taught at the Ernesto Che Guevara school, noted that since the founding of the institution in Bata, its dean has always come from Pinar del Río as part of that university's long-term commitment to the program of cooperation.

In the 2007–2008 term, 170 Guinean students were enrolled in the Bata medical school, including 23 in a five-year nursing program. More than half the students—89—are women, a statistic greeted with enthusiasm and pride at the Bata graduation ceremony when announced by María Jesús Nkara, UNGE director of academic affairs.

With the August 5 graduation, 122 Guinean medical students have received their diplomas here since 2006.

High retention rate

"The big majority of all the medical students complete the course," Concepción told us. This contrasts with many other university departments in Equatorial Guinea, where, for a variety of reasons, a large percentage of students drop out in the first or second year.

At the heart of this success, Concepción said, is the individualized attention given to each student as they transform their study and work habits. The Cuban instructors provide tutoring to all students who need assistance. To make this help more effective, "the professors, grouped according to each year of study, meet monthly to discuss how their students are doing and to determine who needs special attention," he said. The students select a representative to take part in these discussions and help uncover problems needing attention that the teachers may not be aware of.

A student, for example, may be living in a neighborhood without electric service and cannot study at home in the evenings. "Or sometimes a student whose first language is Fang has a more limited knowledge of Spanish, and has

Background on Central African nation

BATA, Equatorial Guinea—This Central African country of close to 1 million is composed of a continental region as well as the island of Bioko and several smaller islands in the Gulf of Guinea (see map on facing page).

The language of daily life for the big majority is Fang, Bubi, or another of the indigenous languages. Most Guineans in urban areas also speak Spanish, which is the language of schooling, and some speak French as well. Spanish and French are the two official languages for state business and legal purposes.

The island of Bioko was a staging post for the world slave trade well into the 19th century. The ports of what is now Equatorial Guinea came under Portuguese, Spanish, British, and Dutch colonial rule at different times. After the European colonial powers partitioned Africa among themselves in 1885, the region became the only part of the continent south of the Sahara "owned" by Madrid. Under Spanish rule there was little market activity beyond Spanish-dominated logging and the cultivation of cacao and coffee, virtually all for export.

Equatorial Guinea gained independence from Spain in 1968. The first Guinean government, headed by President Francisco Macías Nguema, became an 11-year reign of terror. Declaring himself president for life, and sometimes referring to himself as a

"socialist," Macías cloaked his cruel, Pol Pot–like repression in anti-Spanish, anticlerical, and anti-"white" demagoguery. Churches and schools were closed, and Guineans with even a few years of education became special targets. Many were jailed, tortured, or executed, and tens of thousands of Guineans fled into exile.

In a country that after centuries of colonial and imperialist domination was already one of the most ravaged in Africa, even minimal trade and production for the market collapsed. On Aug. 3, 1979, Macías was overthrown in a coup by young Guinean military officers led by Teodoro Obiang Nguema, who is today president of Equatorial Guinea. Most Guineans mark that date as the beginning of the work to initiate modern development of the country.

The discovery of vast reserves of oil and gas beneath the offshore waters of Equatorial Guinea some 15 years ago increased the strategic importance of the country as the 21st century began. Production and trade have expanded rapidly while economic and social contradictions have accelerated.

—MARTÍN KOPPEL

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Equatorial Guinea, on western coast of Central Africa

: the internationalist example of a socialist revolution

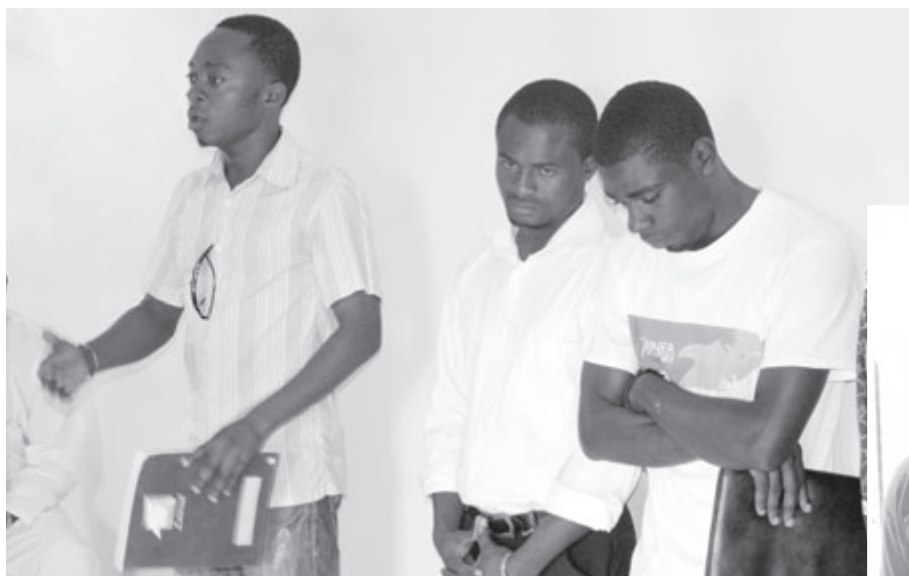
a hard time understanding a Cuban professor who talks very fast.” Several dialects of Fang are the main indigenous languages spoken in the region of the African continent that includes Equatorial Guinea.

“This kind of individualized attention has been decisive in giving us a high retention rate,” noted Dr. Juan Carlos Méndez, head of the Cuban medical brigade here, who previously directed the ministry of public health in the Cuban province of Ciego de Avila.

Graduates of the medical school we talked with said the help and encouragement they received from their teachers had been decisive in their ability to overcome myriad obstacles and complete their studies. Such obstacles are often outside the experience and assumptions of even sympathetic observers from countries dominated by class relations shaped by capitalist production and trade.

Equatorial Guinea does not have a class of small landowning agricultural producers struggling to grow a surplus to sell on the market in order to pay off debts and not lose their land. An industrial working class is only now barely beginning to emerge. These historical realities mean that the habits of work imposed on the toilers by the capitalist whip of debt slavery for the peasantry, and job competition and wage slavery for the working class, exist in embryo at most in large parts of Central Africa.

Dr. Florentino Abaga Ondó, a Guinean who is today medical director of the hospital in Mbini, a coastal town on the continent, is one of the 2006 graduating class who studied five years in Cuba and returned here for the sixth. What he found most difficult when he began his studies in Cuba, he told us, was not the food or cultural differences, or being far from family and friends. It was “learning to work, learning to work hard. That’s what real study is.” He also felt the pressure of being one of the few African students in his class at the Latin American Medical School, he said—feeling he had to prove he wouldn’t wash out as some of his fellow students expected. He succeeded, and attributed this in large part to the backing and encouragement of his



Militant photos by Martín Koppel
Above (from left), José Fernando Monsuy, Estanislao Mtutumu Bee, and José Antonio Ondó are enrolled in medical school’s extension program in their home town of Mongomo, as is Dorotea Okomo Esono in town of Mbini (photo on right). Next to her is university rector Carlos Nse Nsuga.

teachers.

“The most difficult thing in my first year was to adjust to the method of study,” said Tecla Mangue Mitogo, who graduated August 5. “We had to get used to reading and studying at least five hours a day.

“The Cuban professors helped us a lot. They taught us to study and to work.”

Extension program

Today dozens of Guinean physicians are working at health-care centers across the country, alongside Cuban doctors, nurses, and technicians. At every public hospital we visited the medical director, often still in his 20s, was a Bata medical school graduate. That is now true throughout the country, we were told.

Starting this year, another important step is being taken. A full medical school program is being offered in five more cities for young people who could not otherwise overcome barriers to living and studying in Bata, whether financial and housing limitations, family responsibilities, or whatever.

Dr. Méndez reported that 13 students are enrolled in the program so far: 2 in Ebebiyin, 3 in Mongomo, 1 in Mbini, 5 in Malabo, and 2 in Luba. Next year the program is projected to expand to additional towns, with an increased number of students in each.

On a visit to several towns in the continental region, we met several of these students and their instructors. We accompanied the rector of the National University of Equatorial Guinea, Carlos Nse Nsuga, and a group of professors and administrators on a tour of the university extension centers in Ebebiyin, Mongomo, and Mbini. The university personnel were assessing the first months of the new program.

The medical courses are taught by Cuban doctors working in those districts. Many have extensive teaching experience in Cuba as well as years of medical practice. In Kogo, for example, the nurse recently arrived from Cuba, with more than 30 years of experience, had previously been head of nursing administration for all of Havana.

In Mongomo three students are enrolled in the extension program, which began in May with a three-month preparatory course. Dr. Luisa Gómez, one

of the Cuban doctors leading the program there, told us the preliminary studies include chemistry, biology, an introduction to medicine, and computer training. Beginning their practical education right from the start, the students accompany the doctors each morning as they make their rounds and treat patients at the hospital clinic. Classes are held in the afternoon, after the doctor-instructors finish their hospital consultations for the day.

José Fernando Monsuy, 24, a student in Mongomo, said he had already learned a lot from going into the community with Cuban doctors to educate local residents on basic hygiene and preventive health care.

University rector Nse Nsuga urged the students to speak not only about the progress they are making but the problems they confront. “If you don’t raise them, we can’t together address them,” he said.

The students described various practical obstacles. Their new classroom is still under construction, as part of the hospital’s renovation. In the meantime, two computers, which they use to watch instructional DVDs, are temporarily set up at the modest residence of the Cuban medical personnel. They can use these computers only after 6:00 p.m., when electricity comes on for the evening. (For more on the challenges of electrification, see

the previous two articles.)

Students pointed to other problems, as well. There is a lack of textbooks. The room serving as a school library is often locked during hours they are able to use it. After some discussion, the rector encouraged the students to take some control in busting through these impediments. He urged them to make a proposal on library hours and then arrange with hospital administrators to assign someone to have a library key. He told them to organize themselves to photocopy and share reading materials.

The medical director, Dr. Nicéforo Edjang, a Guinean graduate of the school in Bata, also responded to the three students. There is a basis to their complaints, he said. But the heart of what underlies them is that they are unaccustomed to the discipline of study, which takes work.

“You have to adjust to what it means to study,” Edjang said. “That’s your biggest difficulty. All of us who went to the medical school faced the challenges you are going through. In fact, the conditions we confronted in the first year were even harder,” Edjang said. For example, that very first class, we learned on a previous visit to Equatorial Guinea in 2005, had no textbooks at all for the initial six months.

The students agreed to take the sug-

Continued on page 10



Circles show towns visited during reporting trip.



Militant/Martín Koppel
Cuban medical brigade in Luba on island of Bioko. In front row, from left: Magdalena Morales, Noemí Alvarez, Yuneysi Lorente, and Yudisleidy de Armas. In back are Arturo Brooks (left) and governor of South Bioko province, José Nguema Mba Nza.

Equatorial Guinea

Continued from page 9

gestions of the rector and initiate solutions to the obstacles they were raising.

Medical personnel in several cities we visited pointed out that training students in their home towns, as opposed to a distant city, let alone another country, strengthens their commitment to work in their own communities. Educating doctors ready to work in areas most in need of health-care facilities is a cornerstone of the medical training they receive.

In Kogo, for example, an isolated town in the southwest corner of the country, the small hospital now has one Guinean doctor who is also the director—an important gain. He grew up in a different region, however.

“We need to train more doctors who are from here and who will stay here,” Dr. Hilario Nguema told us. It makes a big difference to have doctors who grew up in the community and are known. In the Kogo area it helps to have personnel who speak Ndowe, the first language for most in the coastal region.

Méndez said students training in their home towns “know their own communities and are committed to them. Seeing what others like them have been able to achieve will speed the process of winning more medical students to the program and training even more doctors. And it will strengthen the public health system, especially in areas that have had little access to trained medical personnel.”

‘We’ll stay as long as needed’

At the end of our two-week tour, Méndez and Concepción took time from their busy work schedules with the medical brigades posted throughout the country and at the school in Bata to tell us a little more about the work Cuban volunteers are carrying out.

The medical cooperation between the Cuban and Guinean governments, they emphasized, aims to train Equatorial Guinean doctors and nurses who will work to transform public health care in their country. This is a principle guiding all Cuba’s medical missions in every country where they are invited to work, they noted.

To accomplish this goal, Méndez said, “we are committed to stay as long as necessary.”

Such medical collaboration is an ex-

pression of the proletarian internationalist course that has marked Cuba’s socialist revolution for half a century.

In 1963 the very first Cuban medical brigades volunteered to go to Africa. They went to newly independent Algeria less than a year after the French colonial regime had been defeated by the Algerian National Liberation Front in a long and bitter war.

That same year, and acting with the same solidarity, Cuba responded to a request by Algeria’s workers and peasants government to send weapons and volunteer combatants to help deter an imperialist-backed assault by the Moroccan regime. Over the decades, Cuban internationalists have fought alongside anti-imperialist forces throughout Africa—from the Congo to Guinea-Bissau to Angola—as well as in Latin America.

That tens of thousands of Cuban medical personnel are today providing health care in the most hard-to-reach parts of countries the world over is one of the most demonstrative expressions of the *socialist* character of the revolution that Cuban workers and farmers carried out, overturning capitalist property relations and transforming the consciousness of millions. No other country in the world is capable of anything remotely comparable, nor does any other government want to do so.

As Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara, himself a physician, explained and demonstrated by his own example, “To be a revolutionary doctor, you must first make a revolution.”

In Cuba not only has health care—an expensive commodity under capitalism—become free and available to all as a basic right, but those who become medical workers are educated in that spirit.

As of 2008, more than 36,000 Cuban doctors, dentists, nurses, and medical technicians are working as volunteers in 81 countries, according to Cuba’s ministry of health. That includes 1,500 doctors in 35 African countries. Cuban personnel are responsible for medical schools not only in Equatorial Guinea but in Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, and Eritrea.

The Cuban medical brigade has been in Equatorial Guinea since 2000 as part of the Comprehensive Health Program for Central America, the Ca-



Militant/Martin Koppel

Cuban internationalist doctors discuss their work in Equatorial Guinea. Speaking is Dr. Imelse Martínez. “When we return home we’ll be able to use these experiences to explain the gains of the Cuban Revolution,” said Dr. Laura Cobo (second from right).

ribbean, Africa, and Asia, Méndez told us. That initiative had been launched by the Cuban government two years earlier in response to the destruction caused by Hurricane Mitch in Central America. “We sent emergency medical brigades to the region struck by the hurricane,” he said, and from there the program expanded to other parts of the world.

Today the 160 doctors, nurses, and lab technicians who make up the Cuban brigade in Equatorial Guinea are working in 18 of the country’s 21 districts—57 of them on the island of Bioko and 103 on the continent. Except for those with special leadership responsibilities, who sometimes serve longer, brigade members generally work here for two years, with a one-month vacation at the end of the first year.

“The Cuban doctors go to every corner of the country, even to the most remote areas,” the president of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema, told us in an August 7 interview. “You can see the discipline and morale of those doctors.”

The living expenses of the Cuban medical workers are paid by the government of Equatorial Guinea. “We provide them with a stipend, housing, transportation, and other necessities,” Obiang said.

In addition to the minimal stipend—the same for all personnel, irrespective of qualifications—the Cuban government pays the Cuban medical volunteers their regular monthly salaries in Cuban pesos, giving that amount directly to their families in Cuba or depositing it in a bank account held for them until their return. Medical workers who have completed international missions receive \$50 a month in hard currency for the rest of their working lives in addition to their salary in Cuban pesos.

Conquests of Cuban Revolution

In a discussion with more than 30 Cuban medical brigade members in Bata one evening, several talked about the deep impact the experience of working in Equatorial Guinea has had on them.

Some had previously served in Angola, Iraq, Western Sahara, Ethiopia, or other countries—one was on her fourth internationalist assignment. For most of them, however, it was their first time living and working outside Cuba. While they vary widely in age and work experience, most are in their 40s or early 50s.

“Here we discovered a reality we ourselves had never encountered in Cuba,”

said Dr. Laura Cobo. “We’ve seen preventable diseases we had previously only read about in books. We’ve seen children dying of malaria or dying of hunger.” Some of the doctors noted that many diseases common in Equatorial Guinea had ravaged working people in Cuba as well, before the socialist revolution conquered in the early 1960s and began transforming social relations. Even the oldest of the brigade members, however, are generally too young to have experienced those capitalist conditions firsthand.

In Equatorial Guinea, Cobo said, Cuban medical personnel often treat patients for polio. “In our country it’s been years since we’ve seen a case of polio. In Cuba children receive 13 vaccinations in their first year.”

One of the hardest experiences here, several doctors told us, was seeing children with malaria or other curable illnesses who were brought to the hospital too late to be treated and died.

At the same time, Dr. William Pérez added, “there are cases of children in critical condition who, despite our limited resources, we are able to restore to health. That gives us tremendous satisfaction.”

Dr. Rubén Romero told us he has been teaching in Bata two years. “This medical school is a big step forward. Now the third class of students is graduating,” he said. “We can begin to see the fruits of our labor.”

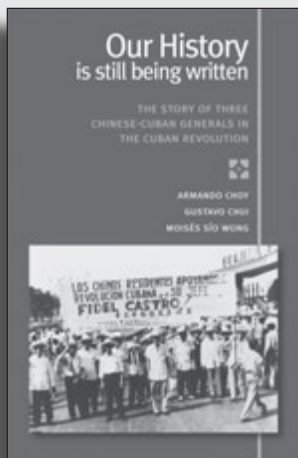
Cobo said the hardest thing she’s had to get used to is that “health care here is a commodity.” In Cuba high-quality medical care is free for everyone. But here “patients have to pay for everything, from medicine to emergency operations. If they can’t pay we’re not supposed to treat them.”

Some doctors told us they find this so difficult to carry out that they not infrequently forget to tell patients they have to pay.

“This experience prepares us to work better on behalf of the Cuban Revolution,” Cobo said. “When we return home, we’ll be able to use these experiences—despite all the material shortages we face in Cuba—to explain the gains of the revolution,” to explain what a socialist revolution means.

The conditions the Cuban doctors describe are the reality millions confront in Africa and other parts of the semi-colonial world. Most satisfying of all, they say, is the opportunity to be part of *changing* this reality.

Brian Taylor and Omari Musa contributed to this article.



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Labor and the capitalist crisis

The demise of Lehman Brothers and Merrill Lynch and the \$85 billion bailout of the American Insurance Group are the latest signs of the financial crisis the U.S. rulers face, the worst since the opening of the Great Depression.

The problem is not lack of bank regulation or out-of-control capitalists. The problem is the capitalist system itself.

The current crisis is rooted in the decline since the 1960s in the average rate of industrial profit. This has made investments in new plants and capacity-expanding equipment less profitable for the capitalists. Instead, the superwealthy rulers have placed their funds more into financial markets.

The falling rate of profit also pushes the U.S. rulers toward increased competition with their imperialist rivals for control of the world's markets and resources, producing more wars. At the same time, they drive up the number of deaths and injuries in coal mines, on construction sites, and in factories as they ramp up line speeds and cut back on safety in order to wring more profit from our labor.

Some 85 percent of the value of stock is held by those in the top 10 percent income bracket in the United States. Those feeling the most immediate, direct impact from a plunge in the stock market and the collapse of leading investment and insur-

ance firms are those in the middle class, not the working class. But the financial market is inseparable from the production and circulation of commodities. So a financial crash will have a ruinous impact on the toilers and over time will lead to sharpening class battles.

To defend workers from the devastating consequences of capitalism's crisis, the labor movement should demand a federally-funded public works program that can put millions to work at union-scale wages, instead of funneling tens of billions of dollars to the banks and insurance companies. Institute a shorter workweek with no cut in pay that can spread the available work around to all those who need it. Put into effect a cost-of-living adjustment that guarantees when prices go up, workers' income automatically rises to match.

Workers need to use union power. We need our own party, a labor party based on fighting unions, that can challenge the capitalist parties in the electoral arena and in the streets. That will be a step toward building a revolutionary movement that can replace the propertied minority with a government of workers and farmers that will abolish capitalism, reorganize society in the interests of the vast majority, the toilers, and join in the world struggle for socialism.

Moscow: 'Troops in Georgia for long time'

BY SETH GALINSKY

Moscow said it will more than double the number of troops it has stationed in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. At a September 9 news conference, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov made clear the Russian military intends to stay "for a long time."

Prior to the Russian invasion of Georgia in August, which involved some 10,000 soldiers, Moscow had about 1,000 troops in South Ossetia and 2,500 in Abkhazia. This will now increase to about 3,600 soldiers in each region.

Abkhaz officials declared they will sign an agreement establishing Russian military bases, including at its Black Sea ports.

The announcements came soon after the Russian government agreed to allow 200 European Union "monitors" into "security" zones around the two regions in Georgia. London's *Telegraph* newspaper reported that the British government will send soldiers and cops, as part of an EU force that will replace Russian troops that are to withdraw from the zones by October 10. The EU forces will not be allowed into South Ossetia or Abkhazia.

Georgian officials said September 13 that Russian forces had pulled out from six checkpoints near the port of Poti.

As one of the pretexts for invading, Moscow said it was defending the national rights of the two provinces. But within days of Russian president Dmitry Medvedev's "recognition" of independence, South Ossetian official Eduard Kokoity said, "Soon there will be no North or South Ossetia. There will be a united Alania [Ossetia] as part of Russia."

South Ossetia dependent on Moscow

Kokoity later said he had been "misunderstood." However, according to Kokoity, the new South Ossetian government will include "specialists" from Russia.

South Ossetia, with a population of about 70,000, is dependent on Russia for 60 percent of its income. It has many mineral resources but little industry.

According to Alexander Cherkasov of the Russian human rights group Memorial, predominantly Georgian villages in South Ossetia are still being torched. After visiting the province Cherkasov told Reuters, "every day we saw new fires."

"Danger remains not just for Georgian and mixed families," he said, "but for Ossetian villagers as well from looters who, sensing their impunity, steal and torch not just what belongs to Georgians, but any abandoned home."

Other than Moscow, only the government of Nicaragua has recognized the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Moscow won a diplomatic victory September 5 when the Collective Security Treaty Organization—which includes Armenia, Belarus, and the Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan—blamed Georgia for the war. The group stopped short of recognizing independence of the two Georgian regions.

In a slap at Moscow, however, on September 12 the Asian Development Bank—which includes representatives from Japan, China, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—unanimously approved a \$40 million low-interest loan to the Georgian government. And the Shanghai Cooperation Organization refused to back the Russian position at an August 28 meeting in Tajikistan.

Moscow does not hide its desire for a new government in Georgia. Russian president Medvedev said Georgian "president [Mikhail] Saakashvili no longer exists in our eyes. He is a political corpse." Medvedev has also played up reports of actions by opposition parties there. However, there is so far no indication that groups opposed to the Georgian leader are making much progress, although a few of his opponents are calling for new elections.

Washington pledges \$1 billion

In early September U.S. vice president Richard Cheney traveled to Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Georgia, where he met with Saakashvili. A day earlier, Washington pledged \$1 billion to help Georgia recover from the war. U.S. officials said the package does not include any military assistance, according to the *New York Times*.

In Baku, Azerbaijan, Cheney said that Washington wants to ensure that "energy export routes are diverse and reliable." The central Asian nation has vast oil reserves, which Washington would like to see shipped through pipelines that bypass Russia and Iran. The Azerbaijani government of Ilham Aliyev has sought to balance its relations with Moscow, Tehran, and Washington.

The production and transport of oil and natural gas are key anchors of the economies in Russia and much of the Caucasus region. Russia supplies 26 percent of Europe's oil and 29 percent of its natural gas. But Moscow's oil wealth has not been able to insulate Russia from the affects of the worldwide economic crisis.

The instability of energy prices along with fallout from the invasion triggered a steep sell-off in the Russian stock market in August along with a drop in the value of the ruble.

Troy Davis

Continued from front page

the rally, they noted.

Among those addressing the crowd were Correia; officers of Amnesty International; Shujaa Graham and Darby Tillis, two former death-row prisoners who won exoneration; Edward DuBose, president of the Georgia Conference of the NAACP; and relatives of Curtis Osborne, a prisoner who was recently executed.

Earlier that morning, a small delegation of Davis's relatives and supporters presented the parole board with petitions containing more than 23,000 signatures asking the board to grant him clemency. The next day the board heard testimony first from supporters of Davis and then from the prosecution. "[Our] lawyers presented the additional witnesses who told accounts of police detectives threatening them with guns and [the] DA threatening with perjury if they changed their testimonies against Troy," Correia wrote in her letter.

"The lawyers showed how they put Troy's picture on wanted posters . . . and they took a Polaroid out of my mom's house and they only showed the witnesses that photo to identify Troy several days after he had turned himself in. So Troy was never picked out of [a] lineup."

"Then less than 30 minutes after [the] DA's side left, the Parole Board held a press conference and denied Troy," explained Correia.

Seven of the nine nonpolice witnesses against Davis have recanted their testimony or contradicted the story they told in court. There was never any physical evidence tying Davis to the murder for which he was convicted and sentenced to death.

Corriea announced that there will be another rally in Atlanta. She urged supporters to hold protests, contact news media outlets, and continue to send messages to the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles asking it to reconsider Troy's case. Fax numbers for the board are: 404-651-8502; 404-651-6670; and 404-651-5282. More information on the case can be found at www.gfadp.org and www.troyanthonydavis.org.

U.S. troops

Continued from page 3

NATO operation there, bringing the total "coalition" troops from about 20,000 to 31,000. About two-thirds of U.S. forces in Afghanistan fight as part of the NATO operation; the rest are Special Forces under direct U.S. command.

Relations between Washington and the Pakistani government, its unstable ally in the "war on terror," have been strained as the U.S. military has stepped up its operations on Pakistani soil. Islamabad has said U.S. operations inside Pakistan's border are inciting deep resentment among the population and fomenting resistance.

Imperialist troops have killed thousands of civilians in Afghanistan, and many others in Pakistan since the Afghan war began in 2001. "Regrettably, there will be times when our pursuit of the enemy will result in accidental civilian deaths. This has been the case throughout the history of warfare," Bush said September 9.

Bolivia

Continued from page 4

of natural gas for social programs.

The opposition is demanding autonomy from the central government. In August they failed in an effort to recall Morales.

This time around they set up roadblocks in the four provinces, causing fuel and food shortages. They also destroyed or set fire to about 30 public buildings, according to Reuters.

The Bolivian government declared martial law September 12 in Pando province and dispatched troops there who retook the airport and other facilities in Cobija, the provincial capital.

Morales was elected president in 2005 after a wave of protests by workers and peasants starting in 2003 toppled two previous U.S.-backed presidents. The majority of the country's population are of Quechua or Aymara indigenous origin. Morales is the first Aymara president of Bolivia.